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ABSTRACT

This study examines the attitudes and opinions of Pontiac, Michigan school administrators after their schools have undergone approximately nine months of court ordered desegregation. Specifically, it investigates from the school principal's point of view the effects of desegregation upon total school operation, the general attitudes of principals toward the desegregation plan, the role of the administrator in the desegregated school setting, and the documentation of any information offered which might prove helpful to administrators in a similar situation. Structured personal interview data indicate that, of the 48 principals interviewed, 41 or 85 percent remain or became positive about the desegregation plan after the first year. Seventy-seven percent believe that over time desegregation of schools will be beneficial for children in Pontiac. In looking back, principals note that they and their staffs were unprepared to meet the challenge of desegregation. The lack of sufficient training and experience, adequate time to plan, and a good understanding of black culture are cited most frequently as serious handicaps to desegregation. A need for pre-service or in-service training for faculty and staff is noted. In comparing the 1971-72 school year to the previous one, student attendance and participation at extra-curricular activities in parental involvement at school functions shows a decline. (Author/AM)

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THE VIEWS OF PONTIAC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS ON THE PROCESS OF DESEGREGATION

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A Study Completed for the Emergency School Assistance Program of the School District of the City of Pontiac

Submitted by: David Kazen and Alfred Pavlish
Department of Research and Development
School District of the City of Pontiac

August 15, 1972

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The Department of Research and Development is also grateful for the cooperation of Pontiac Schools Data Processing Center in analyzing the data.

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes and opinions of Pontiac, Michigan school administrators after their schools had undergone approximately nine months of court-ordered desegregation. More specifically, the study attempted to investigate from a school principal's point of view: 1) the effects of desegregation upon total school operation; 2) the general attitudes of principals toward the desegregation plan; and 3) the role of the administrator in a desegregated school setting. A fourth goal of this research was to document any information offered by Pontiac principals which might prove helpful to other administrators whose school systems were entering into the desegregation process.

Subjects and Data Collection

The data collected in this study were gathered during 52 personal interviews of Pontiac school principals at the elementary, junior high and senior high school levels. Central Office administrators and directors of Federal or State funded projects were not included in the sample.

The data gathering procedure used was a 30 - 45 minute personal structured interview. The interviews were conducted by two senior university students majoring in the behavioral sciences. Both were females; one white and one black.

Prior to beginning the field work, each administrator received an introductory letter from the superintendent. The letter explained the purposes of the study and solicited the cooperation of principals.

Two days after the letter was sent, the interviewers began telephoning principals to arrange interview appointments. Where possible, care was taken to match interviewer and principal by race.

The bulk of the interviews took place between May 26 and June 14, 1972.

The resultant data were coded and transcribed to punch cards. Analyses were completed in cooperation with the Data Processing Center, Pontiac Schools.

NOTE: Although only 48 principals were interviewed, additonal data were collected from four principals who had administrative responsibility for two schools each. It was anticipated that these particular principals might answer certain questions differently for each of their two schools. Therefore, a "double interview" was conducted with these principals regarding certain school - specific questions.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Of the 48 principals interviewed in this study, 41 or 85% remained or became positive about the desegregation plan after the first year. Only one principal reported that his attitude had been negatively influenced by his first year's experience. Three principals indicated that they were initially opposed to the desegregation plan and still remain so. Three other principals, at the time of this study were not certain as to their attitude.

Seventy-seven (77) per cent of sampled principals believed that over time the desegregation of schools would be beneficial for Pontiac children. They regarded the desegregation effort as being instrumental in achieving better inter-group relations, diminishing racism and in improving the education of black children.

However, in looking back over the school year, Pontiac principals generally indicated that they and their staffs were unprepared to meet the challenge of desegregating the schools. Moreover, two-thirds of the administrators interviewed said that they wished they had done some things differently.

The lack of sufficient training (and experience), adequate time to plan, and a good understanding of black culture were cited most frequently as serious handicaps to the desegregation process.

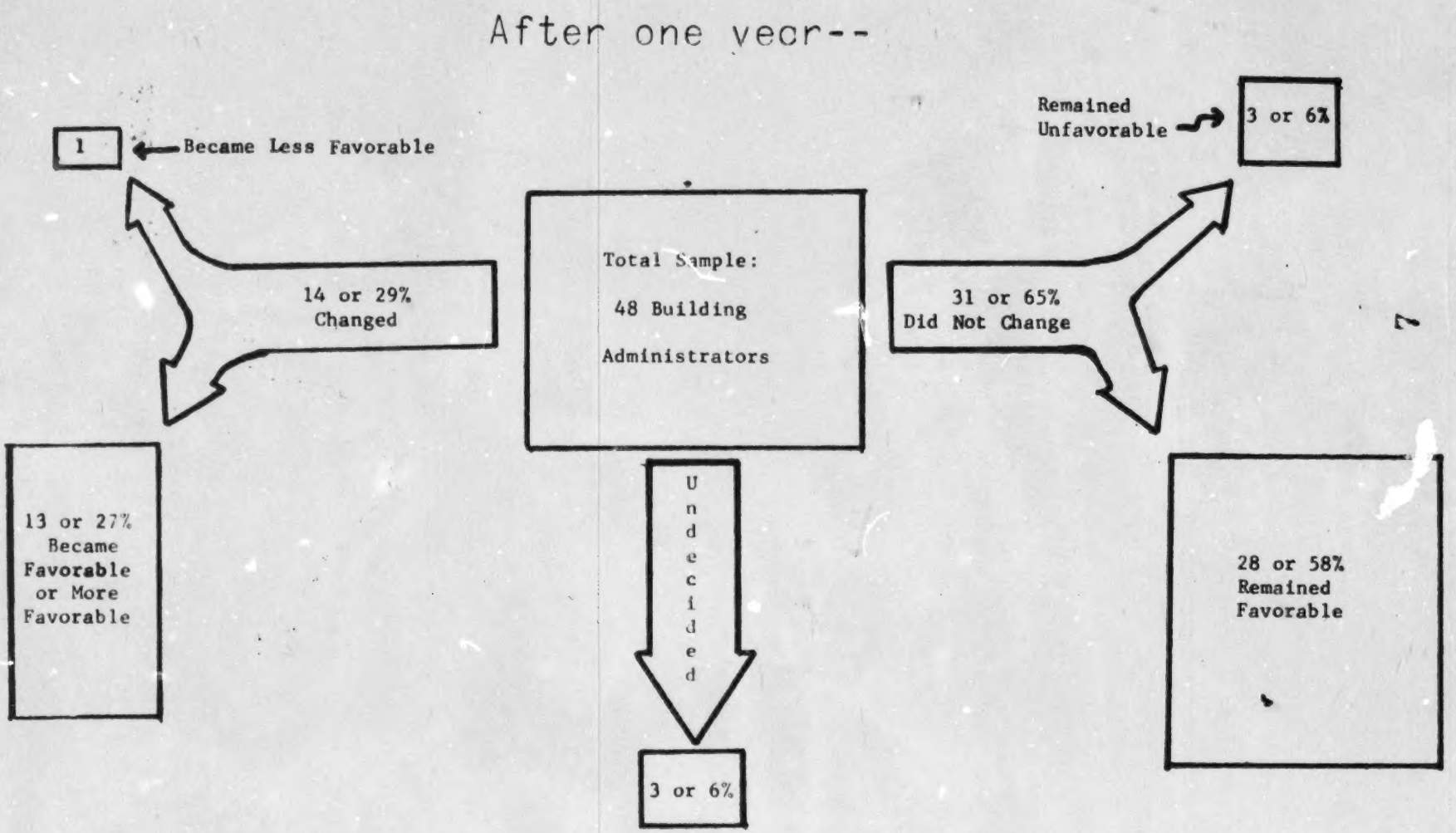
Eighty-eight (88) per cent of the sample felt that there was a need for pre-service or in-service training for faculty and staff. As a part of a possible in-service program, principals recommended human relations and sensitivity training, training in classroom management techniques, and methods for teaching children of different races and cultures. Principals also suggested that workshops given by teachers and administrators who had had experience in school desegregation would be valuable.

In comparing the 1971-72 school year to the previous school year, Pontiac principals concurred that student school attendance, participation at extra-curricular activities and parent attendance at school functions had declined.

Principal opinions regarding the effects of desegregation upon student discipline, confrontations, academic achievement and staff moral were divided.

Seventy-seven (77) per cent of the principals, however, felt that positive interracial relations had increased.

"Think back to how you felt about the desegregation plan on the first day of school this year. Do you feel that your attitude toward the desegregation plan has changed since then?"



Verbatims

Experience with students, parents and staff has been mostly delightful. Continuous progress program has created a positive attitude. (black elementary administrator)

The kids had a good attitude when they came in. The credit for a good year goes to them - we just facilitated. (white junior high administrator)

Nothing really surprised me. It's been a move forward, a very enjoyable, rewarding, and tiring year. (white elementary administrator)

I feel best about the results of the math and reading programs. There have been some outstanding gains. (white elementary administrator)

Best year since being in the system. The children are working to get along. (black junior high administrator)

The plan has shown itself to be very effective in this building. Parents are more accepting of plan - hope this will begin a trend. (white elementary administrator)

There's been a positive change in attitudes of students and parents. Some even apologized for earlier attitudes as they learned better. (black junior high administrator)

Never had a better staff or one that worked harder. There's no one I want to get rid of. Have made tremendous growth since fall. One teacher who wanted to leave now says, "Thank goodness I didn't quit last fall as a failure." (white elementary administrator)

My concerns were for the unknown - now they're for the known. Should black children act like our (sic) kids - should we make them? No one has ever spelled out standards. If they're lower, what help to anyone? (white elementary administrator)

Was a negative year. NAG pickets started it all. Teachers resigned early, enrollment down, kids afraid to come in. Poor parents took a loss to sell homes and move out. (white junior high administrator)

At a time when blacks were getting together, this was not a favorable move. (black junior high administrator)

Primary job this year - reorganize, and change attitudes of parents, faculty, students. Academic achievement dropped - some good students have left. Took time to build teamwork of new staff. Parents still have fear and distrust. Student discipline has to change to allow teachers to teach. Does it work? We don't know yet. Things should be better in third year of program. (white elementary administrator)

Of the 48 administrators interviewed, two-thirds would have done things differently if they had to go through the desegregation process again.

When asked the question "What would you have done differently?" they said:

Provided staff inservice	33%
Involved parents	23%
Provided sufficient student activities during bus times, lunch and after school	19%
Promoted better staff attitudes	15%
Hired more monitors	13%
Improved the curriculum	12%
Involved more students in decision-making	8%
Spent more time assisting and reassuring students	8%
Devoted more time to student inter-group relations	6%
Hired more administrators (black and white)	6%

Verbatims

All who had contact with students should have received in-service or pre-service training - that includes bus drivers, secretaries, etc. (white senior high administrator)

Didn't know what to expect of bussing logistics. Planners did highly expert job, plan even had flexibility, could be worked with to provide sports and activities busses. (white junior high administrator)

Should have orientation sessions for incoming students, visit sending schools, send parents a letter of welcome and a description of courses. Kids should have some choices, something to look forward to, and a good idea of what to expect. (white junior high administrator)

Busses and money essential for after-school programs. Children resent the loss of school spirit, need these activities to help them identify with the school they attend now, not their former school. (white elementary administrator)

Should have done pre-testing, prepared profile sheet on each youngster to follow him to his assigned school. Could then evaluate job of principal and teachers better. (white elementary administrator)

More direct sensitivity training. Undercurrents should have been exposed. (black elementary administrator)

Should have involved students in administrative moves, motivated them and made them feel a part. Instead school became more stringent, there was an absence of positive practice. (black junior high administrator)

Parents must be better informed, don't know enough about what we're teaching. The school board should prepare a statement outlining district's philosophy, goals and objectives. (black elementary administrator)

Should have planned more compatible teacher placement. (black elementary administrator)

Should have started earlier in excluding students by expulsion. Worked with them too long, not successfully. Damaging to other kids. Should have spent more time preparing student body. Students were apprehensive, will be less scared next year. (white junior high administrator)

Should have trained students in bus procedures, maybe used student guides on busses. (black junior high administrator)

"At the beginning of the school year, do you think you and your staff were adequately prepared for the process of desegregating the schools?

YES = 35%

NO = 54%

"What did you and your staff lack?"

Sufficient training and/or experience relative to desegregation	56%
Enough lead time to organize and prepare	25%
Knowledge and understanding of black community	21%
Appropriate and sufficient human and financial resources	12%
Adequate self-confidence	10%
Ability to cope with white hostility	10%
Parental support to make desegregation work	4%
Support of central office administration	4%

Verbatims

Nothing prepares you for police and pickets and students causing trouble at the door. (white senior high administrator)

Not prepared for so much hostility. A major problem is white resistance and fear, reflected in the children, although the children don't use racial slurs any longer. (white elementary administrator)

Nobody was ready. The court order was too late. (white elementary administrator)

Have to learn by experience. Much training has value or meaning only after "feet are wet." Go over past successful inner-city teaching for new concepts and ideas, read and discuss with black teachers or those with desegregated experience. History of minority groups, current thinking of leaders important (also white). (white junior high administrator)

Sensitivity training does not change attitudes. People get to know each other only when placed together and having need to do so. (black elementary administrator)

Teachers had too high expectations of bussed-in white kids from low-income area. Rough. Never had any trouble here before. Kids carry knives. (white elementary administator)

Teachers weren't familiar with black kids, had many hangups about their behavior. (black elementary administrator)

There was hostility at workshops, but it worked out, got things off our chests. Discussed the idea that all low SES kids are aggressive - have to be - not just black kids. (black junior high administrator)

"Do you feel that pre-service or in-service workshops would have been valuable to you and your staff at the beginning of the school year?"

Eighty-eight per cent of the administrators interviewed said "YES." As a part of an in-service program, principals recommended:

Human relations training	50%
Sensitivity training	44%
Training in classroom management techniques	35%
Methods for teaching culturally different children	33%
Workshops run by teachers and administrators who have had experience in desegregating schools	25%
Planning and organization for teamwork goal setting	25%
Techniques to obtain community involvement and support	21%
Direct contact and dialogue with the black community	19%
Strengthening the instructional program	19%
Meaningful student involvement	10%

Five administrators, or 10 percent of the sample, said that pre-service or in-service workshops would not have been valuable. Their reasons were:

Workshops are a waste of time

Can't solve such problems in workshops

No one qualified to lead workshops

Teachers are opposed to workshops

Verbatims

Teachers and administrators should have been in school much earlier for district and building-level intensive workshops, especially teacher-expectation workshops. Expectations were too low or too high - it took months to be more realistic. (white elementary administrator)

Learn from black teachers about black kids and from white teachers about white kids in workshops. Also black teachers need help in how to handle discipline of white kids in a white neighborhood. (white elementary administrator)

Students and parents should have been allowed to attend the workshops. (black junior high administrator)

Administrators should learn not to overdo kindness and fake smiles. They should be firm, fair and honest. (black junior high administrator)

Screen personnel running workshops. Sometimes things get worse than before workshops. Chaos results if teachers, parents and students attend together. (white senior high administrator)

Workshops don't help. Who has the know-how to handle pickets, bombing, insults which infuriate kids? (white elementary administrator)

Workshops valuable only if forceful administrative leadership. If principal had stated he was going to make it work, teachers would have been more positive. (black junior high administrator)

Extracurricular assignments for teachers - go to churches of the other race, visit homes of the sending community. Social contact has more value than workshops in overcoming sterotypes. (white junior high administrator)

Working on the instructional program is key. Mixing is not enough. Students must get off the bus to a good education. (white elementary administrator)

Teachers needed to learn from socialogists on the characteristics of children of low-income families. White teachers needed training on words to avoid, etc. - no experience at all. (white elementary administrator)

Couldn't have pre-service workshops - attitudes too negative, staff too hostile (white junior high administrator)

Teachers need advice on heterogenous teaching. Workshops help but they're not enough. It goes all the way back to the colleges, where selection and training should be done more carefully. Something like a Board of Examiners is needed. Organize program so kids won't be stuck with a bad teacher all year. (white junior high administrator)

"In the long run, do you think the desegregation plan will be beneficial, detrimental, or have no effect upon the quality of education for Pontiac children?"

Beneficial	77%
Detrimental	6%
Don't know/Refused	17%

"How do you think the desegregation plan will be beneficial?"

Promote inter-group relations	60%
Help society overcome racism	46%
Improve academic achievement of black students	40%
Improve academic achievement of all students	35%
Better the self-image of black children	21%

"How do you think the desegration plan will be detrimental?"

Drive high achieving students out of Pontiac	10%
Cause more racial tension and strife	4%
Lower the academic achievement of white students	4%

Verbatims

Teachers will be more thoughtful, better prepared. Can't get away with sloppy thinking anymore. Lots more has been done this year in teaching and discussing the students' environment, social problems, comminity, current events - real things as opposed to just book learning. Even some attempts to talk about home attitudes and the reasons for them. (black junior high administrator)

Parents will pay closer attention to kids and schools - principal may push teachers to do a better job of teaching. (black senior high administrator)

Will cause students to compete more and is better training for the world they'll have to live in. (black junior high administrator)

Quality has decreased, some of the best students have left, many teachers are exhausted in discipline problems. Color may not be the issue - socioeconomic status might be. (white elementary administrator)

Will have no effect on achievement. My students, black and white, come from similar socioeconomic backgrounds and there are no significant differences on their performance tests. With a 60/40 ratio (high/low SES) it would make a difference. (white elementary administrator)

Will expose children to new possibilities for their future, college, different jobs - not just Pontiac Motors. (white elementary administrator)

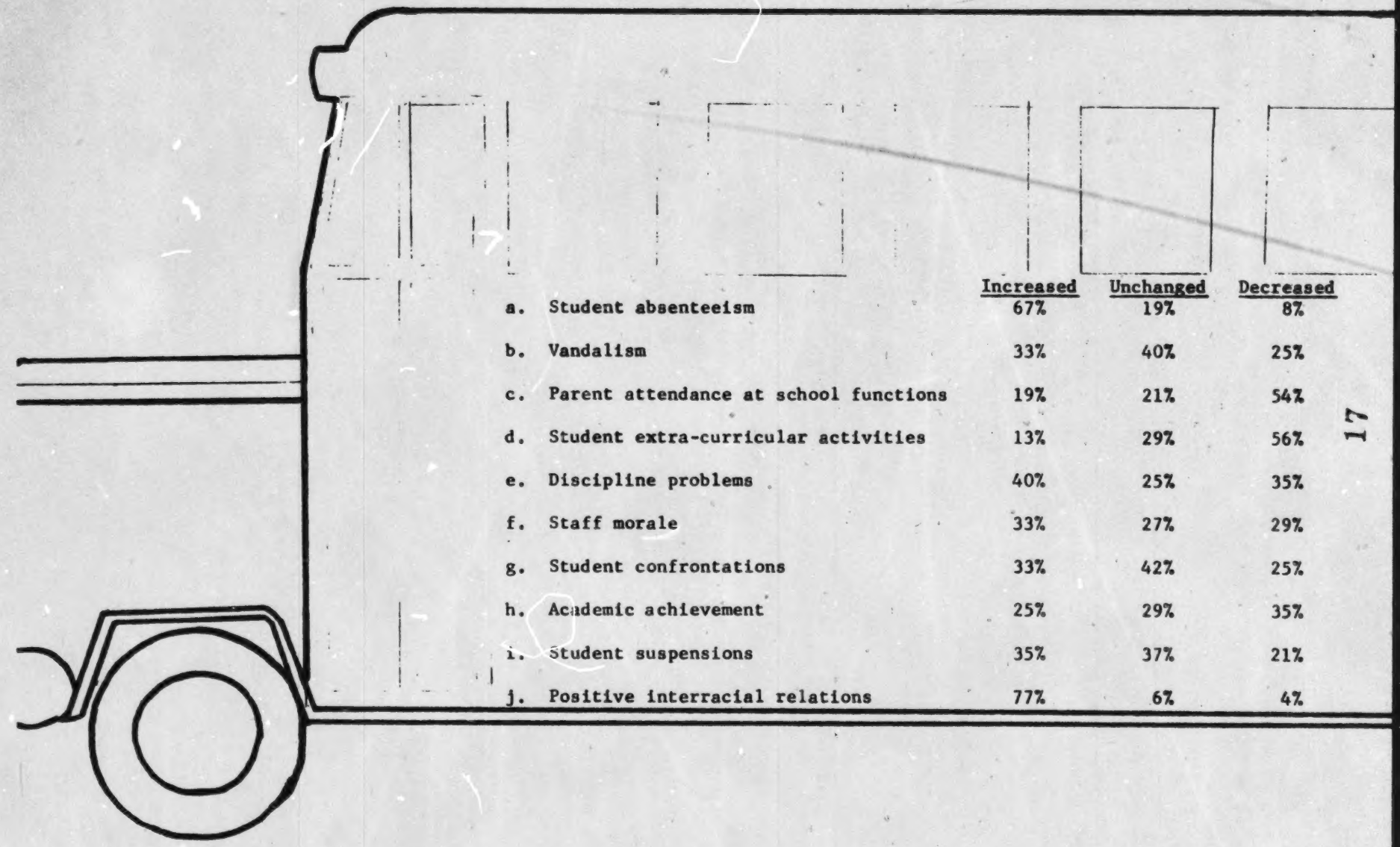
Achievement and self-concept are linked to the successful implementation of the continuous progress program - grouping by achievement across grade and age lines. (white elementary administrator)

Will help stop extremely dangerous polorization in this country, help black and white resist propaganda and sterotyping. Will have long lasting effect, even in future home-buying patterns. (black elementary administrator)

Black achievement will go up and whites will stay the same, or go up if there is competition - whites will want to maintain superiority. (black elementary administrator)

Black children have their own experiences to offer. Its been a revelation to me this year that black children are more resilient, able to take troubles and oppression more easily. White discipline has been more of a problem because of parent attitudes. (black elementary administrator)

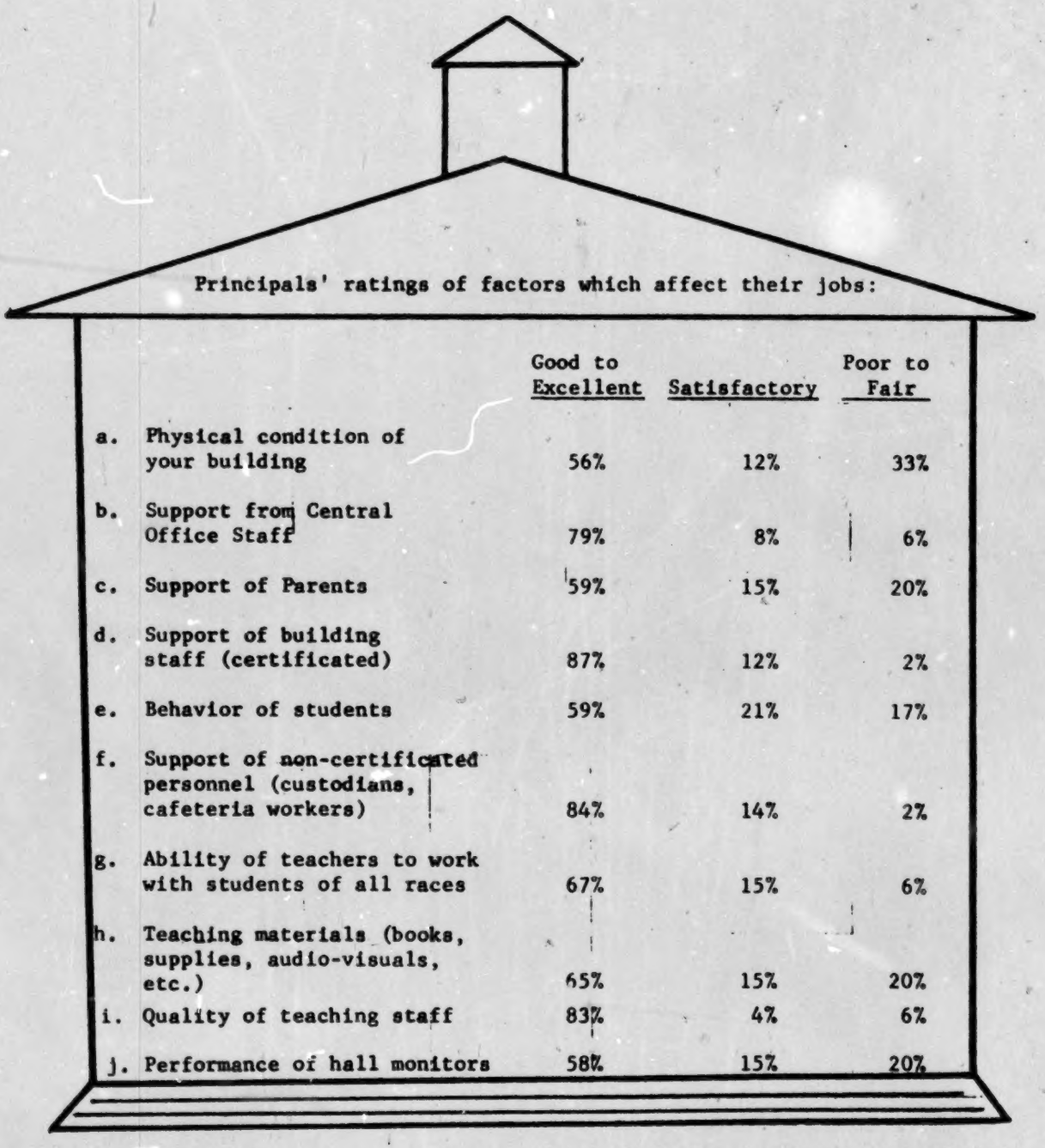
"In comparison to last year, tell me whether you think these areas have been increased, decreased, or remained unchanged by the desegregation plan."



		Increased	Unchanged	Decreased
a.	Student absenteeism	67%	19%	8%
b.	Vandalism	33%	40%	25%
c.	Parent attendance at school functions	19%	21%	54%
d.	Student extra-curricular activities	13%	29%	56%
e.	Discipline problems	40%	25%	35%
f.	Staff morale	33%	27%	29%
g.	Student confrontations	33%	42%	25%
h.	Academic achievement	25%	29%	35%
i.	Student suspensions	35%	37%	21%
j.	Positive interracial relations	77%	6%	4%

"I am going to read a number of statements which may or may not apply to your school. Tell me whether you agree, neither agree nor disagree or disagree with these statements."

	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Don't know/ Refused
a. Teachers have a voice in determining building policies	94%	4%	2%	-
b. Black students get preferred treatment	4%	8%	86%	2%
c. Racial tension exists in the classrooms	25%	8%	61%	6%
d. Students have a voice in determining the policies which affect them	33%	21%	19%	27%
e. White students get preferred treatment	4%	6%	88%	2%
f. The rules for student conduct are fair	86%	-	6%	8%
g. Shortening the school day from six to five hours has been detrimental to the instructional program in the junior and senior high schools	13%	-	22%	65%
h. Curriculum offerings are varied enough to meet the needs of most children	63%	4%	27%	6%



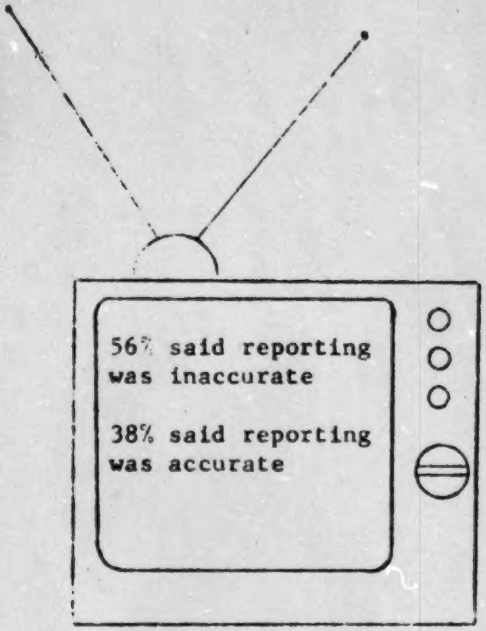
Principals' ratings of factors which affect their jobs:

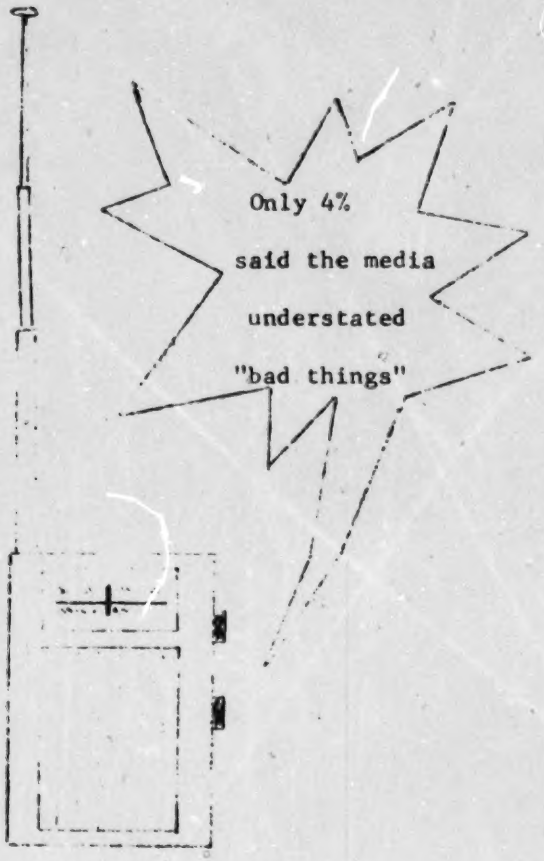
		Good to Excellent	Satisfactory	Poor to Fair
a.	Physical condition of your building	56%	12%	33%
b.	Support from Central Office Staff	79%	8%	6%
c.	Support of Parents	59%	15%	20%
d.	Support of building staff (certificated)	87%	12%	2%
e.	Behavior of students	59%	21%	17%
f.	Support of non-certificated personnel (custodians, cafeteria workers)	84%	14%	2%
g.	Ability of teachers to work with students of all races	67%	15%	6%
h.	Teaching materials (books, supplies, audio-visuals, etc.)	65%	15%	20%
i.	Quality of teaching staff	83%	4%	6%
j.	Performance of hall monitors	58%	15%	20%

"Assuming for the moment that you had complete control over how your time is expended, tell me whether you would spend more time, about the same amount of time, or less time engaged in the activities listed below."

	More	About the same	Less
a. Attending professional conferences and seminars	58%	35%	6%
b. Developing curriculum	90%	6%	2%
c. Dealing with discipline cases	12%	37%	42%
d. Routine office work	8%	25%	63%
e. Assisting teachers in carrying out the instructional program	92%	4%	2%
f. Working with parents/community	81%	17%	-
g. Working with students on non-discipline problems	92%	6%	-

"Do you think the news media are accurately reporting what happens in the Pontiac Schools?"





DAILY NEWSPAPER

56% said media overstated "bad things."

25% said media understated "good things."

"If you were asked to name just one event or experience which affected you as a building administrator more than any other, what would it be?"

Positive Remarks:

The acceptance of principal and teachers by black community.

Postive behavior of students.

I feel best about student gains in math and reading.

Reorganization of instruction.

Faculty and Jaycees nominating me for "Outstanding Young Administration of the Year" in Michigan.

Bringing white parents around. Taking them to visit black schools. Received appologies for previous negative actions.

Staff made good adjustment to desegregation. Staff did good job with students.

Potluck dinner held for 350 people. Equal showing of black and white. Friendly gathering.

Students general improvement in black/white attitudes.

Few class changes due to computer set-up of students and counselors. Majority of changes was for betterment of student.

Took 540 students to Edgewater. No incidents. Kids were great. Did us proud.

Had complete cooperation of staff and students in implementing the 5 hour day. Led to reduction in discipline problems and more time for teacher evaluation, curriculum development and staff communications.

Negative Remarks:

NAG boycott at the beginning of school.

Poor attendance of students.

I tried to work with drop-outs and failed. Often can't help because of home problems.

Being transferred to a new school and losing old ties with former staff, students and community.

Losing students to private schools.

Settlement of a faculty/administration-black/white grievance.

Receiving threatening phone calls from hostile whites.

Uncertainty of professional staff due to lack of preparation and development of teamwork.

Initial confrontation - physically violent mob.

Very poor behavior of bus riding students.

Unable to communicate and draw leadership from black community. Lack of parent involvement.

Some staff members unable to work with students to bring about academic growth.

Reduction of staff due to millage vote failure.

"Now that you have had a year of experience in a newly desegregated school system, what words of advice would you have for a school principal whose system is about to desegregate?"

Verbatims

Should have pre-service with all staff. Meet with student leaders to attempt to end unnecessary friction. Keep in contact with community being served, black, white, positive or negative. Maintain communication between school and parents - many meetings. Cut down rumors, explain program. Train students in bus procedures. In-service training for bus drivers.

Don't let integration upset previous programs - don't be static - but do have high expectations.

Carefully written set of rules with reasons. Expected some old rules not to be applicable and weren't. Had to change as new situation arose.

Don't fret and worry about how kids and parents get along, but improve instruction and positive experiences. What's at the end of the bus ride is important.

Pray! Have or develop patience and understanding. Deal with explosive, upset parents. Be a good listener. Have confidence. You'll survive.

Assess faculty assigned if possible - pull together as team, give positive leadership - individualize treatment. Desegregate classrooms, not just district. Don't allow voluntary re-segregation if possible. Serve as example. Set up peer pressure in faculty in this direction. Be cognizant of racial/cultural differences. Don't flaunt these. Be sensitive about references, words and concepts with different connotations. Be specific. Treat children fairly, consistently, rationally - don't ever belittle. Meet, share ideas with all groups. Offer opportunities for informal gathering.

Gain as much knowledge of past desegregation efforts as possible. Go and visit, talk to kids and parents there. Have to believe in integration - can't fake it. If you don't, take another job.

Plan carefully for safety and organization. Anticipate any problems, be more cautious than optimistic.

Depends on his background. If he is black or has any black experience, he will have some insight. Don't be easily threatened - kids will question him on many things. Have some good concrete ways to build communications with staff and kids.

Verbatims continued.

Stay loose! Many became rigid with long tenure. Varied background very valuable.

Be prepared to spend lots more time.

Prepare yourself. Be fair all the way through - in concern, assignment, discipline and sensitivity for minority peoples and attempt to reach and discuss with parents.

Be organized! Set standards agreed to by staff. Balance classrooms racially as much as possible. Most discipline problems in 50-50 classes. Where black 20-30, less trouble.

Much depends on individuals. Get involved, broaden base of experience with new groups, new situations, new ideas, and new kinds of meetings.

If possible, give full information and get rid of fears of staff. Prepare teachers with meaningful programs, discard those which don't work. Don't just react. If possible, have programs for monitors, secretaries, etc. - all staff. Bus drivers important - sometimes cause great problems with kids and run to administrators for instant help.

Work with staff for good orientation on what they face. Allow them to analyze and familiarize themselves with new situations caused by desegregation. If apprehensive based on ignorance - they react in way that presents difficulties.

Somehow instill in staff the leadership role they must play.

Understand minorities in every way - background, interest, behavior patterns, maybe change your own philosophy to be able to cope.

Visit desegregated schools. Take course work in urban affairs. Visit principals of desegregated schools.

Make contact with schools who had the experience. Make plans for workshops like those funded under ESAP.

Make attempt to get parents together before school begins.

Don't be all things to all people. Keep value. Expect and meet problems fairly. Be fair to kids and parents. Involve kids where possible in rule-making, then hold to it.